

## Women's History Month 2005

### “Up-Armor Yourself With Personal Courage” (Slide)

Thank you for the kind introduction ....I see a few familiar faces in the audience ....it is good to be with you today...

I often tease that you know you are getting old when you are asked to speak for Women's HISTORY month! I always find introductions a little embarrassing.....what I would really like you to remember is that I am just a country girl from a town with no traffic lights in upstate New York, and I am one of four children of BJ and Dick Halstead, and I am proud to be a Soldier in the US Army...the best Army in the world. Many of you have heard our senior leadership, both military and civilian, say our Army is the best ever. I absolutely agree. For me, it is an honor to Serve in the military...and each day I commit myself to having the personal courage for doing what is right and doing my best to lead America's sons and daughters.

As I was preparing my remarks for Women's History month this year, I spent a lot of time thinking about what I would say...what would be an appropriate message? It seems we focus on some of the same great women at these events year after year. Of course, for very good reasons, as they accomplished great things...and we do not want to forget their significant contributions...nor do we want to lose sight of the fact that they were ordinary people doing extraordinary things—much like we see in the people we work with each day. So, this year, I kept wondering to myself, however, what do these women have in common? We focus on their contributions, but maybe we should focus on what inspired, motivated, and prepared them for their actions?

What I discovered as I have reflected on my own life is, the more responsibility I am given, the more I depend on personal courage to lead and serve. And, as I have reflected, I have assessed those times where personal courage had been needed, and when I used it.....and when, perhaps, I should have, but did not. So, today, I would like to present the stories of a few women who have made a difference (Slide), by using the lens of personal courage to look at their actions and subsequent contributions.

Let's consider Rosa Parks. (Slide) Think about the personal courage she mustered on that fateful December day in 1955 by not giving up her seat to a white person....she had endured a long day's work of stitching and ironing shirts, she was tired, she took her seat at the back of the bus, just as the law required.... but when the bus became full, the bus driver...who had the right to change the law...told her she had to stand and let the white person have her seat....that was the defining moment...she was fed up...this had happened to her before...but this time, this moment in history, she said “enough is enough”...she was tired of being pushed around. Rosa Parks' courage for this brief MOMENT sparked the fires of change! Her decision, her action started a movement that would bring an end to a tradition of legal segregation across the South and the entire nation. Her courage “encouraged” other blacks....they boycotted the busses, they formed up outside the courthouse to show their support for her...and through their encouragement, they reinforced to her that she had made the right decision. Eventually, the Supreme Court declared segregation on public busses was unconstitutional.

Now.....I doubt Rosa Parks ever suspected her gesture would turn a new page in the history of American race relations. I do not think Rosa Parks stuck to her guns and remained in her seat because she knew she was going to change America or set the stage for the Civil rights movement. I think she simply believed on a very personal level what she was being told to do was wrong, how she was being treated was unfair, and she just was not going to tolerate it anymore. As a result of her courage, many of us have never had to experience the harsh, unfair segregation that she did...some of us in this room cannot even comprehend such double standards and treatment to another human being...and thanks to Rosa Parks, we will never have to!

Hindsight truly is 20/20. For us, it is easy to comprehend how Rosa Parks' personal courage changed the world, because we are familiar with how history was written by her simple act. However, without that knowledge, how many of us would have had the intestinal fortitude, the courage to act in the same manner? On the contrary, how many of us would have just stayed in our comfort zone after a long, hard day? ...unwilling or unable to confront someone or something we know is wrong, because confrontation is uncomfortable, and it requires energy and courage...therefore, instead of initiating the sparks of change, you or I in this situation may in fact have decided NOT to act, and in doing so, I submit we would have established another standard...a lower standard.

Personal courage takes us out of our comfort zone. Ultimately, it is our gut, our values, our human instinct for right and wrong which tells us when we should take a stand, take action. Please, please, do not ignore your instinct for doing what is right. We must all get out of our comfort zone, show personal courage and make a difference. If we do NOT, we may miss our "Rosa Parks' moment in history."

There are, I think, several forms of personal courage. I would call the courage Rosa Parks used "Social or Moral Courage." Another powerful figure (Slide) who demonstrated "social courage" was Eleanor Roosevelt. In 1932, she privately declared, "I never wanted to be a president's wife." Rather than settling into a role she did not like, she rewrote the rules. She exerted unprecedented influence over the president's policies, her husband's policies.

During her husband's long political career, Eleanor Roosevelt witnessed a great deal of poverty and abuse of basic human rights. She did something about it, she did not just stay in her expected role. She helped shape and drive policy concerning women's rights, civil rights, and poverty. She worked to make standards better for the disadvantaged. Eleanor Roosevelt had to face a lot of people who did not like her ideas, and did not like the influence she had on the Presidency. She faced many obstacles, but she was disciplined and determined, and she persevered. Her personal courage, her social courage, helped her make changes which influenced both men and women.

After President Roosevelt's death in 1945, she became the U.S. representative to the United Nations General Assembly, where she was a primary author of the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This document outlines the basic human rights every person deserves, regardless of gender, religion, or birthplace. There is still much work to be accomplished to establish these basic rights in place around the world and to continue her great legacy.

I believe the United States, and especially the US Army are doing a major part to continue Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy. (Slide) In the War on Terrorism, one of the most significant end-products of our efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq is the establishment of the democratic process, and one could argue, the subsequent enforcement of women's rights in these countries. I am honored and privileged to be a Soldier who is contributing to their democracy.

What about physical courage? When I think of a woman who demonstrated remarkable physical courage, (Slide) I think of Amelia Earhart. She became famous in 1932 when she became the first woman--and second person--to fly solo across the Atlantic, on the fifth anniversary of Charles Lindbergh's feat. In January 1935, Earhart became the first person, not the first woman, the first person, to fly alone across the Pacific Ocean. She flew from Honolulu to California – alone!

Unfortunately, in 1937, during an attempt to fly around the world, her plane disappeared. Amelia Earhart had the courage to do things, I suspect, many men would not attempt. She saw women being considered somehow less able than men, and she did something about it. Her quotes and comments were often full of references to the concept that, "if a man can do it, so can a woman."

There is another aspect of personal courage which I think is absolutely worthy of mention—spiritual courage. When I was a teenager, my life was changed forever after hearing Corrie ten Boom's testimony (Slide) as a political prisoner in the Nazi concentration camps. She, and her whole family, risked their lives to stand up to one of the most evil regimes in world history. It was her spiritual convictions which ignited her personal courage, and made a lasting impact on the thousands of people who have heard her story.

Corrie ten Boom was brought up in an amazing family, she was the youngest of three sisters and one brother. Corrie began training as a watchmaker in the 1920's and became the first female licensed watchmaker in Holland. Before World War II, the ten Boom family, who were devoted Christians, were very active in social work. They opened their home to those in need. When the Nazi occupation began, it became clear that the Jewish people were in grave danger.

Corrie and her family rescued many Jewish people from certain death at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust. Her family became very active in the Dutch underground, hiding Jews, refugees and members of the resistance movement. It was something her family believed was right to do.

In 1944, the ten Booms were betrayed by fellow citizens and turned over to the Nazis. The Nazis arrested Corrie's entire family and they were sent first to Dutch prisons, and finally to the notorious Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany. Her father died in Scheveningen Prison, her nephew Christiaan never returned from Bergen-Belsen, her sister Betsie died in Ravensbrück and her brother died shortly after the war. Corrie was released on a technicality just before the end of the war, only days after Betsie died, and only days before women of her own age were killed. Corrie returned to Holland to operate rehabilitation centers and continued helping people until her death at the age of 91 – on her birthday.

When Corrie Ten Boom and her family risked their lives to save Jewish families, they did not know millions of Jewish men, women and children would be killed...they did not know when the war would be over or how long the Nazis would be in charge. But, she and her family recognized the evil, they were led by their convictions to make a difference, and they made the decision to risk their own lives to prevent the spread of such evil - despite the near certainty of their being captured and sent to concentration camps. They did not concern themselves with their own fate...they had the courage to put the fate of others ahead of themselves.

As I contemplate about such courage, such conviction to live the values the ten Boom's believed in, it makes me stop and wonder what seemingly small event is going to happen to me today where my decision on how to handle it could change my life forever, or someone else's life, or perhaps even history! Corrie ten Boom saw people being persecuted because of their religion and race, and decided to provide them a hiding place. What events will face us? And, how will we respond?

When I survey Corrie ten Boom's actions, her decision to act is clear for me...I understand the personal courage she needed and that she exhibited, because I have the advantage of knowing how the future unfolded. What haunts me is...without knowing and understanding what the future held...had I been her at that point in time....at that point in history....would I have possessed the personal courage to act on my convictions like Corrie ten Boom? And, if not, what is missing in my life that she possessed to be able to do so?

Perhaps, Corrie ten Boom was “up-armored” with a different level of personal courage than you or me. We have all read in the papers and seen on the news recently the importance of “up-armoring” our military vehicles to provide a higher level of force protection for our Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Well, what about our character, our person? What are we doing to “up-armor” ourselves? Our Soldiers? Our families? Mentally, emotionally, and spiritually? “Up-armoring” ourselves so we are prepared to deal with death, with tragedy, with fear, with harsh living conditions, and perhaps, even with directly dealing with the enemy – either because we have captured them or they have captured us.

I believe Corrie ten Boom was “up-armored” with her strong faith, and she shared her faith with others....proclaiming, even at the worse of times while imprisoned, “There is no pit so deep that God's love is not deeper still.” Corrie ten Boom epitomized “spiritual courage.” Her life, her actions encourage me to “up-armor” myself with my faith and with the Army values that are etched on the dog-tags I drape over my head each and every day. The values that every Soldier should have etched in their heart...that we must LIVE by....Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage!

I know that with every person who has been kidnapped in Iraq, (Slide) and placed on TV pleading for their life, I have looked closely and deeply at myself and pondered my own strengths and weaknesses, and assessed my ability, my courage to survive and deal with such a situation....all the time wondering if I would pass or fail.

If I make the analogy that I represent a piece of equipment, then as a child I would tell you that my parents (Slide) began to “Up-Armor” or “harden” me by encouraging me not to be afraid, to stand up for what I believe in, to pursue my dreams, and to never quit.... During times of anxiousness, failure and uncertainty, I was “discouraged” but

through the counsel, strength, and love that my parents always provided, I was “encouraged.” And, in doing so, I believe they taught me how to encourage others.

People have often given me credit for being courageous because I attended West Point (Slide) at a time in history when women were first being fully integrated into the military and allowed to attend as cadets at West Point. I do not recall thinking of myself as particularly courageous, but perhaps in hindsight I was. I do remember being determined, being disciplined, and not allowing myself to quit. I did not intentionally do so for my own personal gain. For me, the driving factors, the motivators for staying and not quitting were much more about not wanting to let down my parents, my friends, my church and my community. I did not want to let down the host of “encouragers” who believed in me, who were praying for me, who had faith in me. The same remains true today – it is why I stay in the Army – only now, I have added to this list, Soldiers and their families – I do NOT want to let them down!

I like this concept of “encourager.” I think to encourage means to instill or inspire courage in someone else. As a leader during a time of war, this is hugely important. As I have encouraged Soldiers, I have seen first-hand that Soldiers of all ranks, male and female, and from all backgrounds possess personal courage. As an Army at War, we see examples of incredible personal courage every day.

We are seeing and hearing more and more about women with incredible personal courage because women are now integrated in units across the battlefield, and they are leading and commanding units in combat at all levels (Slide...build), from Platoon Leader to Commanding General. This fact, in and of itself, is amazing because just 16 yrs ago, in 1989, during Operation Just Cause in Panama, Captain Linda Bray, became the first female to lead U.S. troops in battle. Her MP company, the 988<sup>th</sup>, was in a three-hour fire fight with Panamanian Defense Forces.

Women are now having the opportunity and the honor to serve their country at all levels and in almost every capacity. Over 23,000 women have served in the Central Command Area of Operations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Sadly, 35 women have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country...23 of them as a result of enemy fire....and two of these women were civilian employees.

I would like to reflect for just a moment and honor (Slide) just a few of these women who paid the ultimate sacrifice—they had the courage to Serve others, to Serve their Nation during a time of War, and although they each had their own reasons for volunteering, I believe they all possessed the common denominator of personal courage...they set aside better paying jobs, the comfort of safe homes, and placed Service to others before their own personal comfort. And now their parents, their siblings, their spouses, their children, their fellow comrades must find the courage to respect their choice to Serve, to celebrate their lives, to honor their deaths and to move on themselves—encouraged and inspired by the ones they have lost.

It is hard to find an environment which demands more personal courage than being in combat or in an area where combat is likely. These women joined for a variety of reasons, but the overwhelming reason they served was to make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of others.

Sgt Tina (Tea-May) Time (Slide), of American Samoan heritage, was killed Dec. 13, 2004, in a head-on crash during a sandstorm. She told her mother before she deployed, “Mom, don’t be afraid. I want to do this for my country and now I am doing it.”

Sgt. Pamela Geraldine Osbourne, a mother of three children, died Oct. 11, 2004, when two rockets hit her camp. She had two dreams, to become a U.S. citizen and to serve in the military – she accomplished both. Because of a medical condition, she did not have to deploy. But she did anyway.

PFC Leslie Jackson, of Richmond, Va., was 18 when she died after her vehicle hit an IED. Her aunt said, “The Army is what she wanted. That’s why there are no regrets.”

SSG Kimberly Voelz, a bomb disposal expert, died in her husband’s arms on Dec. 14, 2003, after an IED that she was trying to defuse went off. Her husband, also a bomb disposal expert, was on another mission when he heard about his wife and rushed to her side. Kimberly’s mother said, “she believed in what she was doing over there to help the Iraqi people. She died for America.”

SPC Rachel Bosveld was 19 when she died in a mortar attack on October 26, 2003. She was an MP stationed in Giessen, Germany. Her father served in the Army from 1967 to 1969 in Italy. Although he worried “because she was a girl,” Rachel reassured him, explaining that she was just as good as the boys. And though her mother was “devastated,” and sat her down many times to discuss this decision, Rachel stood firm. “There was no questioning her decision. It was final in her mind,” said her mother...”All there was left to do was to back her up.”

Barbara Heald was 60, (Slide) she was 60 years old!!!, when she was killed by a mortar round on January 29, 2004 in Baghdad. She had already retired from the Department of Agriculture when she volunteered to go to Iraq.

Fern Holland was a young, successful attorney at a Washington firm when she quit to go work in Africa. Later she went to Iraq to help local women assert their rights. She spent a lot of her time promoting women’s political empowerment. She helped write parts of the Iraqi Interim Constitution to ensure women would have a role in the country’s system of government. She was murdered near Baghdad by masked gunmen.

SFC Linda Tarango-Griess was killed July 11, 2004, by a roadside bomb near Samarra. Her husband, also a Soldier, was given the option of not deploying due to his wife’s death. He decided to go and fight for his country.

These Soldiers and civilian employees represent the thousands of service members whose personal courage helps them do what they believe is the right thing to do. In their life of Service to others and to our Nation, and in their deaths, they have made a difference for America and for the countries we are on point to help bring democracy to their land.

Soldiers are not the only ones who have displayed personal courage. For every Soldier (Slide), there are family members and friends and entire communities who make their own kind of sacrifices which require personal courage to be able to fulfill. They wait, and hope, and pray

each time their Soldier goes off to training or deploys for war, that they will safely return....always knowing the reality they may not.

My hope for each of us today is that the lives of these women and the personal courage they possessed will encourage each of us to look deep inside ourselves, and prepare ourselves, "up-armor" ourselves with the personal courage we need to face whatever challenges are presented to us. May we not miss that moment when we have the opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life, or perhaps even greater, that moment in history when we have the chance to spark the fires of change for America, and for our world!

May God bless each of you and may God bless all those who Serve in harm's way.  
Thank you.